Useful Lives Dixon

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"And they two made a Covenant before the Lord."

A SERMON

BY THE

Venerable Archdeacon Dixon, B.A.,

RECTOR OF GUELPH AND EXAMINING CHAPLAIN.

PREACHED IN

CHRIST CHURCH CATHEDRAL, HAMILTON,

SEPTEMBER 7TH, 1883,

AT THE SERVICES IN COMMEMORATION OF THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARIES OF THE ORDINATION OF THE

RIGHT REV'D THOMAS BROCK FULLER, D.C.L. & D.D.
BISHOP OF NIAGARA,

AND THE

VENERABLE ARCHDEACON McMURRAY, D.C.L. & D.D.
RECTOR OF NIAGARA.

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USEFUL LIVES.

"And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake."—I THESSALONIANS, 5th Chapter, 12th and 13th verses.

WHEN any of the pleasing or solemn events of life occur in a united family, the thoughts of its various members, as well as loving friends, are directed towards them, scanning them with deep interest, their hearts thrilling with sympathy. And to-day, brethren, we commemorate an important incident in the annals of this peaceful united Diocese,—an epoch, I may justly call it, even in the history of the Canadian Church. For to-day we have assembled in this beautiful house of God to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the ordination to the ministry of Christ of our venerated Diocesan, and also of one whose life from boyhood has been interwoven with his, not alone by the bands of a brotherly affection, but by the still stronger ties of a unity of purpose, in advancing the glory of God and the good of His Church. For half a century these two clergymen have been identified with the growth and development of the Anglican Church in Western Canada, for both had seen several birthdays before the clergy in the whole of Ontario numbered more than five, and at the time of their ordination there were less than forty within its bounds.

To-day, then, we meet to celebrate with praise and thanksgiving and Holy Communion, the completion of so long a period of constant ministerial work, while our hearts glow with fervid aspirations to the Throne of grace, that the benefit of their wise counsel and judicious guidance may be spared to the Diocese for a few years more, and that their latter days may be as happy and peaceful as their whole lives have been useful, in the highest and holiest sense of the expression.

The words of the text declare in emphatic language the duty of the laity towards those who exercise spiritual rule over them. A deep-loving sympathy is enjoined, with a proper deference to their lawful authority. For in yielding the respect due to them, God is

honoured, for they are His ministers, and invested with His divine commission,—a commission which, though conferred by human instrumentality, is not derived from human authority; for through it the clergy are bound to Christ by the many stranded golden chain of the Apostolic lineage, and while faithfully proclaiming the truth in His name, have this solemn sanction: "He that heareth you, heareth me, and he that despiseth you, despiseth me, and he that despiseth me, despiseth Him that sent me." And hence it is, the Apostle enjoins the laity to esteem them exceeding highly in love for their work's sake. But as the great divine, Isaac Barrow, says in reference to the text, "the persons primarily intended are the Bishops as the chief guides; secondarily, the Presbyters who receive their authority through the Bishops, and are bound in faithful allegiance to them with the laity." And even so, we of the inferior orders unite with our lay brethren to-day in manifesting our reverent affection for him who is set over us as our chief pastor, and also for that other dignitary of the Church, his friend and companion for more than half a century, and who has also exceedingly strong claims on the Canadian Church to honour him for his work's sake.

In the brief space allotted to a sermon, I can only glance at a few salient points in the life history of these two distinguished soldiers of Christ, with whom, for more than a quarter of a century, I have had the privilege of an intimate friendship.

It is now sixty years since these two were at school together, under the instruction of one of the ablest and most successful schoolmasters Canada ever saw,—the late Bishop Strachan,—and who anticipated in many respects the great Dr. Arnold's mode of treating his pupils. Both Thomas Brock Fuller and William McMurray were of Irish origin, the former being descended on the mother's side from Archbishop Loftus, one of the founders of Trinity College, Dublin,[a] while on the father's side he is a lineal descendant of the Church historian, "Worthy Master Fuller," as he was styled in his day. Born in the garrison at Kingston, where his father, Major Fuller, of the 41st Regiment, was

(a) It was through the exertions of Archbishop Loftus that the site of Trinity College was secured, and he spared no pains in advancing its interests. As a mark of the value placed on his services, he was appointed first Provost. Being one of the Lords Justices of Ireland, it was through his influence the College was saved from destruction during the stormy period of the Rebellion of Tyrone, as its income had ceased. At one time the Professors were almost in a state of starvation, and the Archbishop got for them 40 shillings a week, under the head of "Entertainment for a Canoneer," no civil grants being obtainable. When Bishop Fuller visited Dublin, a few years since, he was surprised to find that his sons and grandsons were entitled, if they entered Trinity, to important privileges, on account of Archbishop Loftus.

quartered, the gallant Sir Isaac Brock, after whom he was named, was his godfather. After passing through all the branches of the Grammar School course at Hamilton, and then "Little York," Mr. Fuller went to the Divinity School at Chambly, L.C., which had attained much celebrity, under the fostering care of the venerated Bishop Stewart. Having completed the prescribed course of Divinity, on the 8th of September, A.D. 1833, he was ordained to the Diaconate, and subsequently laboured as curate in the parish church of Montreal. It was at a very sad and awful time he officiated there. The plague fiend was abroad—the cholera was decimating the people—a deep gloom hung over the city; and for many weary weeks the young clergyman was unceasingly employed amid the fearful scenes of the city pest houses, in visiting the sick, consoling the dying, and burying the dead in their hurriedly made graves. It was indeed a baptism of fire,—a tremendous strain on his mental and physical faculties, a terrible initiation to the most heart-searching duties of the ministry.

From Montreal he removed to Chatham as Missionary; where, alone, for four years, the counties of Lambton and Kent were his field of labour. When he entered upon this duty the spiritual destitution was lamentable, but taking Chatham as the centre, this zealous young Missionary established several stations throughout the counties, which have since grown into vigorous, self-supporting parishes. But at this period the Church throughout Canada was at a very low ebb. There were only forty clergymen, widely scattered over all the Upper Province, so that personal communication was rare, and the existence of many known to the others only by printed reports. They were without combination among themselves, while the laity were few indeed who could give a reason for the hope that was in them, and scarcely any could be found who had a faint sense of responsibility, with regard to the duty of supporting the Church, by giving as God had prospered them. Even for the four counties of the Newcastle District, in which, in a single year, eight thousand English immigrants had settled, there was only one clergyman, who was stationed at Peterborough. From the Ottawa to Lake Huron there were only three Missionaries, where there was work for over a hundred, and to meet the demands of the Province there were three candidates for Holy Orders! Further, the "Society for the Propagation of the Gospel" at this critical juncture announced a necessary reduction, through the cessation of the Imperial Parliamentary grant in the salaries they had hitherto paid, and hinted at a still further withdrawal of support. With respect to the lack of candidates for orders,

faint hopes were cherished that King's College and McGill College, might in time supply a native ministry, but as yet they were of no avail, while reliance for the support of the Church on the Clergy Reserves seemed as fallacious and remote.

Among the clergy none took this deplorable aspect of affairs more to heart than Mr. Fuller, and after much thought and grave deliberation, he published anonymously, in June, 1836, a pamphlet on "The State and Prospects of the Church in Canada."

It is a most remarkable production, not only for the broad comprehensive grasp he took of the questions involved, but also for the extraordinary foresight displayed in his statements. Read by the light of to-day it is a series of prophecies. In trumpet-like tones he declared that the State support of the Episcopate might any moment be swept away—that the colleges to which the Church hopefully looked forward as the nursing mothers of a native clergy would meet the same fate, and the endowments of the Church would be secularised. And even so his forecastings were literally fulfilled The £3,000 stg. a year given by the Imperial Government to Bishop Stewart was wholly withdrawn on his death. The Clergy Reserves were secularised in 1854, and the Church expelled from King's College in 1849.

But this call to arms startled the Church from its fancied security. The slumbering apathy was rudely shaken, and when some three months afterwards, Bishop Mountain convened the Upper Canada Clergy in Toronto, Archdeacon Strachan preached a sermon that moved the hearts of all who loved their Church, pointing out the danger that encompassed it, even as Mr. Fuller had done before, and bringing forward a remedy for its perils. That remedy was the establishment of Diocesan Synods in which the laity should be fully represented, and the arguments of the Archdeacon followed the same lines as those laid down by Mr. Fuller in his pamphlet, where he says,—

"But is it not the part of a wise man, to provide in time against a storm? And do not we see, that this is an age abounding with storms, and that, in a storm, the government would be to us no place of refuge? Do not all see that, though the faith of the government be pledged, yet that government may be obliged to yield to the increasing power of the radical faction; that it may itself be over turned, or that this country may be separated from the mother country?[b] In case any one of these calamities should occur, (none of which are so improbable in an age like this, that a wise man would think it overprudent to guard against its occurrence,) how could the clergy support

(b) The pamphlet was published the year before the rebellion of 1837.

themselves and families? Would the parishes yield a sufficient support for them, if they were thus thrown upon them, when their shoulders were unused to the burden, having ever before been entirely unaccustomed to bear even the slightest weight? I think not; or else human nature is very different from what I imagine it to be; very different from what it showed itself to be, when, at the American Revolution, the Protestant Episcopal Church met with a calamity similar to that which I have supposed it possible may happen to our Church. She then found that the foreign and government assistance, which she had ever considered of great service to her, as it doubtless was, could avail her nothing in such an evil hour. She found that her people, enervated by foreign aid, were not fitted for bearing the burden thus suddenly thrown upon them; that she had scarcely any strength within herself, and that it would have been far better had she provided for the evil hour when it was yet at a distance. But the error was perceived when too late. For more than twenty years she was unable to rise from the blows her improvidence had unfitted her for sustaining, and to supply with ministers those churches that had, by it, been deprived of their ministers."

And again Mr. Fuller says:

"If our churches are similarly situated; if there is any probability of our support from the government being cut off, by any of the sudden changes of the times; if there is any probability of our endowments being wrested from the church, in case of a separation from the mother country, which all must acknowledge to be things by no means impossible, when we look to the state of affairs either here or at home; if, in the case of any such event, our parishes are unprepared for supporting the ministrations of religion, is it wise in us to fold our arms in indifference, hoping that 'to-morrow will be as this day and much more abundant?'

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"If these things are indeed so, and this no one can deny, are we called upon to rest contented with our present depressed condition? I think not. We *require some change;* a change which, under God, will meet our wants, and remove our difficulties. *No change will effect this, less than one by which we may be enabled, together with lay delegates from our parishes, frequently to meet in general council; nothing less than the adoption of a code of laws, embraced in a new constitution, can bring order and regularity to our church; nothing short of the admission of the laity into our councils will give us strength and energy.* The laity alone have in their hands what can supply our wants. Before we can

avail ourselves of it, we must allow them to have some voice in its disbursement. This is human nature. That this change will, under God, effect the desired purpose, is no mere vain imagination. Experience is acknowledged on all sides to outweigh the most subtle arguments; and experience will tell us that the very measures here proposed *have effected the very end desired*, under similar, or even much worse circumstances. No one can deny this, who is acquainted with the history of the church in the United States. Her situation at the time of the revolution was far worse than ours now is. In the words of one of her historians: 'a few years nearly overthrew the work, which had been slowly carried forward by the exertions of a century and a half, and had not Omnipotence interposed, the ruin would have been complete.'"

Having then pointed out the marvellous growth of the American church, he continues:

"If it be inquired what were the chief means used, I reply, the faithful preaching of God's word; unity of purpose and action; the adoption of canons suitable for the state of the country, and binding upon all; and the active assistance of their laity. The conventions provided for by their constitution have been the *instruments*, under God, by which this wonderful change has been effected."

These were the ideas the Venerable Archdeacon Strachan took up and still further developed, and the first fruits of his agitation of the subject was the founding of the Church Society in 1842, which was a great step in preparing the church to cope with her difficulties, caused by the alienation of her property some years later; but he never rested until, in 1853, he presided over the first Colonial Synod of the English Church ever held, but, as the late Revd. Saltern Givens stated, in a letter written in 1877: "Bishop Fuller has the honour of having first suggested Synodical action. Great must have been his satisfaction in witnessing its adoption and the benefits it has conferred upon the Colonial Church." Yes; the grain of mustard seed planted by him in 1836 has grown and developed and spread, so that the system of Synods then suggested was adopted in Canada, in Australia, in Africa, and all the other English Colonies, and, last of all, in the Irish Church, when sacrilegiously despoiled of her property.

From the quotation I have given it will be seen that our Bishop at that very early period of his ministry, realized what is now universally admitted, save by the Methodist body and Romanists, the absolute necessity of the laity taking part in the Synods with the Clergy,

and this also at a time when he stood almost alone, and when the leaders of the Canadian Church were hostile to the idea. And in this connection I may mention as a further instance of his wise forecast, that in the old "Christ's Church" of this parish, and almost on the very spot where I now stand, in the year 1852, at Dr. Bethune's Archidiaconal visitation, Mr. Fuller in a sermon, advocated in vigorous language what at that time was regarded as almost revolutionary, the employment of lay-readers to assist the clergy, under license from the Bishop. It was eleven years afterwards that the idea was taken up in England, and it is now generally adopted by all the Colonial Dioceses, even as it has been accepted and highly approved by our own Provincial Synod. And knowing his views on these subjects, from the confidential intimacy with him I have enjoyed for many years, I can boldly assert that there was nothing of a levelling democratic character about them. He ever held that giving the laity a place in the work and councils of the Church would lead them as he had observed in the States. and lately in visiting Ireland, to study Her distinctive principles, Her Apostolic order, as well as Her Evangelic truths. He fully accepted the views spoken long before, by a great English layman—"When the sense of the unseen world is faint and dim, when the true spirituality of the Sacraments which the priest administers is forgotten, when the conception of his office is lowered, when his actual standing in the apostolic line is depreciated or unknown,—then, the priesthood itself may entertain a jealousy of laymen, and a fear that if any religious offices be ostensibly assigned them, the consequence will be on the part of the people in general, an entire forgetfulness of the distinctive character of the clergy. But this jealousy, of which our own country has had some experience, becomes needless and unmeaning, and in practice it rapidly decreases, when the priestly office is seen in its historical connection with our Saviour through the persons of the Apostles and in its actual stewardship of the Holy Sacraments."

And hence also, amid the toils of his busy life, he published, for the instruction of the laity, several excellent tracts on Christian doctrine and practise, which still retain their practical value and popularity, in the face of the myriad publications on kindred subjects which have since issued from the press.

Surely, then, brethren, considering these things, all present will heartily unite with me in applying the words of the text to our venerated Diocesan, and "honour him exceeding highly for his work's sake."

When appointed Rector of Thorold, in 1840, he established congregations at several points on the line of the Welland Canal, while, at the same time, he was the main-spring of the district branch of "the Church Society," and his hospitable mansion was the centre of all church work, and where his less experienced brethren always met with kind counsel and good, cheering words in their trials and difficulties. Soon after he left Thorold he presented the parish a gift of the $11,000 he had advanced towards the erection of their beautiful church.(c)

When, in 1861, he went to St. George's, Toronto, he found that heavy liabilities, combined with commercial depression, had seriously embarrassed the parochial finances, but he soon, by his eminent administrative abilities, backed by zealous lay helpers, placed that church in a prosperous condition, and in possession of one of the most perfect specimens of a parsonage in Canada.

In 1869 he was appointed Archdeacon of Niagara by Bishop Strachan, as a mark of appreciation of his zeal, energy, and manifold labours on behalf of the Church; his jurisdiction extending over the old Niagara District and the Toronto Diocese east of the city; and in 1875, when the new Diocese of Niagara was set apart, he was elected its first Bishop by more than two-thirds of the clergy and nineteen-twentieths of the lay vote.

Thus, then, brethren, have I brought before you a few of the prominent incidents of a busy life. The manner in which he has exercised his episcopal functions is well known to you all. The rapid growth of the Diocese, and the peace and harmony that have characterised it, are sufficient illustrations of the wisdom of the choice made under God by the Synod when he was elected on the 17th of March, 1875.

At the time of the division, and for years after, the parent Diocese was grievously disturbed by the wretched controversies that were forced upon it; while our condition in the new Diocese reminded me of a scene I once witnessed while sailing with a number of Indians among the myriads of islands that stud the coast of the Georgian Bay for several miles from the mainland. While the large Hudson's

(c) His life at Thorold was a very busy one, both in temporals as well as spirituals. The farmers in the vicinity had fallen into very slovenly habits of farming, and to remedy them, he, by great exertions, induced them to form an "Agricultural Associa'ion," of which he became Vice-President. He secured the presentation of a silver medal for the best managed farm, which was won by one of his neighbours. He also compiled a work on agriculture of a very useful character, which was published in 1851. Through his efforts a vast improvement was made both in the style of farming and in the character of the stock in that part of the Niagara district.

Bay canoe, in which we were, seemed to rest upon glass, the water unruffled save by the flashing paddles of the Indians, we occasionally got a glimpse in the distance of the ocean-like lake outside the islands, and saw great waves rolling, and heard the surf breaking with thunderous roar on the precipitous rocks.

But I have still, my brethren, to give a brief outline of one whose life history has been interwoven with the Bishop's from their boyhood, in ties of brotherly regard and affection, and who also has been an active agent in moulding the history of the Canadian Church. Like Samuel of old, William McMurray was dedicated to God's service when a child, soon after the arrival of his family from Ireland, where he was born, and he and our Bishop were schoolmates for many years. Having completed his Divinity studies before he was of age to be ordained, he was appointed by Sir John Colborne, then Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada, to establish mission posts among the Indians on the north shores of Lakes Huron and Superior, the first church missionary ever sent from Canada to the great North-West. Sir John could give him no information as to the country or how he was to get there, but referred him to the Surveyor-General. This functionary examined all the maps at his disposal, but found there was no survey beyond an island in Lake Huron. However, nothing daunted, he set out for the *terra incognita*, and succeeded, after exactly a month's travel, in reaching Sault St. Marie, which he made the centre of his work, establishing several stations on the shores of the two lakes. After a year's successful labour, he returned to Canada for ordination, which he received at the hands of Bishop Stewart, at St. Armands, on the 11th August, 1833, his friend, Mr. Fuller, being present. He then returned to his rough mission field, where his labours among the wild tribes were crowned with success, during a residence of six years, crowded with romantic and picturesque incident.[d] Thence he removed

(*d*) In the year 1790 Lord Dorchester was Governor-General of Canada, and on his staff was a young Irish gentleman named Johnstone, a relative of the Sir William Johnstone of American history. With several other gentlemen, he was induced to join a hunting expedition bound for the Great Lakes. At this period there was an Indian Sachem, or Prince, named Wau-be-jeek, who exercised supreme control over the tribes about Lake Superior, and lived in barbaric splendour at a place called La Point, where a sacred fire was kept burning continually, the safety of the nation being supposed to depend upon it. This great chief had a daughter remarkable for her beauty and talent, and Mr. Johnstone became so strongly attached to her that he resigned his appointment in order to marry her, and settled at the Sault St. Marie. He lived there for several years, dispensing hospitality in almost royal style. His two daughters were highly educated in Montreal, and one was married to Mr. Schoolcraft, the author of many works on Indian life, and the other to Mr. McMurray. Mrs. Jameson, the authoress, Captain Back, the Arctic explorer,

to Ancaster, and in 1857 he was transferred to the Rectory of Niagara, and on the formation of the new Diocese he was appointed Archdeacon, in 1875.

During his ministry he was selected by Bishop Strachan for three very important missions. First, when Trinity College was struggling into existence, and its very life was imperilled through lack of funds, Mr. McMurray was appointed to appeal for assistance to the Church in the United States. He was received with enthusiasm everywhere. It was the first appeal ever made to the daughter Church by a branch of the mother Church, and a large sum was given in response, sufficient to avert the threatened calamity. To show the high esteem of the American clergy for their Canadian brother, Trinity College, Hartford, conferred on him the honorary degree of M.A., and Columbia College, D.D. Further, as a memorial of the many friends he had made on his tour, a beautiful stained window was placed by them in his church at Dundas.

His second mission was of vital importance to the whole Canadian Church. It was in 1854, when it became apparent that Parliament had determined to secularise the Clergy Reserves. There was no hope of saving them, and it was Dr. McMurray's mission to do what was possible in the interests of the Church. By great exertion the important commutation clause was carried through the Lower House.(c) The bill had still to pass through the Legislative Council, and a large majority had determined to reject it altogether. The Home Government was a broken reed to lean upon, and the wisest and most thoughtful churchmen saw, that if rejected, infinitely worse terms would be forced upon the Church. For nine months the Dr. remained in Quebec, the seat of Government, straining every faculty on behalf of his cause, and at length was successful in getting a majority to accept the bill. And hence, through his marvellous tact and persuasive eloquence the Church in Ontario is in possession of a fund which has proved to be of incalculable benefit, and especially in our own Diocese. His action was highly approved by the Bishop, while Trinity College,

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and other travellers gave interesting accounts of this remarkable family. Mrs. McMurray entered with enthusiasm into her husband's work, and before he mastered the language she accompanied him on his mission tours, translating the prayers, sermons, &c., to his rude congregations, and teaching them to sing and chant. She also established a school or Indian girls, and was very successful in initiating them into the habits of civilised life. Her graceful hospitalities, and kind, sympathetic courtesy of manner, endeared her to a very wide circle of devoted friends. She died a few years since at Niagara.

(c) The Church was deeply indepted to the late Hon. J. H. Cameron and the Hon. Wm. Cayley for their most important services in securing this measure.

Toronto, conferred on him the degree of D.C.L., and he was also appointed a Member of Council.

In 1864, he was selected to visit England, on behalf of the still struggling University. He was most cordially received by the Archbishops and Bishops, the two Universities, and by many statesmen of historic fame. Every where his genial manners, and dignified courtesy won for him devoted friends. By request, he preached in St. Paul's Cathedral,—a compliment never paid before to a colonial clergyman. For twelve months he laboured with brilliant success, obtaining a large sum of money, which aided greatly in tiding the College over its difficulties. In his parish work he has been as successful as in his public missions, and the church in Niagara, in its finished condition and beautiful adornments, and the spacious rectory and surrounding grounds, are monuments of the zeal that could produce such grand results, under unfavourable circumstances. And thus, dear brethren, have I given a brief sketch of the leading features in two lives, interwoven for all time with Canadian Church history. Time will not permit me to dwell on the routine of their duty as faithful parish priests. The never ending, still beginning instruction of their flocks in all that a Christian ought to know and believe to his soul's health. The half-century of thoughtful and assiduous attention to all who were in trouble, sorrow, need, sickness, or any other adversity,—their interest in and fostering care of every parish, work of charity and piety. Until the day of "the restitution of all things," the number and measure of these and similar works of Christian love, the fruits of the Holy Spirit, must remain unspoken. Neither can I do more than allude to the manifold virtues and unostentatious charities of her who, through nearly the whole of the Bishop's ministerial life, has been his true helpmate, comforter, and adviser, and who has won for herself, by the practical exercise of the rich endowments of Christian graces with which God has blessed her, the loving respect and admiration of all who know her;—one of whom it may be well said:

> "Thy works, and alms, and all thy good endeavor
> Stay not behind, nor in the grave are trod,
> But as Faith pointed with her golden rod
> Will follow thee to joy and bliss forever." *(f).*

Like a traveller who has passed through a land of lofty hills and fertile valleys, and who, turning back from some point of vantage to

(f) At an early period of his ministry the Bishop was married to Cynthia, eldest daughter of the late Samuel Street, Esq., of Clark-hill, near the Falls of Niagara. He has three daughters and five sons living.

survey the scenes through which he has journeyed, beholds only the high promontories and bold outlines of the towering hills,—so has it been with me in taking a retrospective view of the half century of work accomplished by the two veterans of the Cross, whom to-day we have assembled to honour by celebrating their "golden wedding" in the ministry of Christ, and who have been living actors in the great crisis of our Church's destinies—the grand turning points in her history, on which, to all human appearance, depended the advance and prosperity of the whole body.

New generations of clergy and laity are growing up around us, and I trust and pray that this commemorative service will write indelibly in their hearts the memories of the days of old, and the noble works that were wrought in them by our fathers in the ministry of Christ, that so they may "honour them exceeding highly for their work's sake." And as for them, let us all pray that they may be spared for a few years more, to see the Church they love so well prosper still further than it has yet done—lengthening its cords and strengthening its stakes, widening its bounds and daily increasing in strength and vigour. May it be light with them at eventide, and may they ever be surrounded by

> "That, which should accompany old age,
> As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends."